

Landscape Conservation in the Southeast

SEAFWA Briefing

October 2010

An Update

Building on Sam Hamilton's legacy, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is committed to working in close collaboration with states, other federal agencies, and private organizations in the interest of landscapes that support and sustain fish and wildlife populations. As Sam often said, "there will be no daylight between our state partners and the Service."

As part of that commitment, the Service's Southeast Region is aligning people and funding with its partners to facilitate the formation of a network of state, federal, and private, science management partnerships known as Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCC). A cornerstone of that bold effort is the development of a multi-agency conservation adaptation strategy linked to the emerging National Fish and Wildlife Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.

We highlight below some of the progress being made and acknowledge this brief update does not capture full spirit and energy of individuals working hard to realize the potential of LCCs.

State Support – Brief Overview

States have assumed a critical leadership role in the development of LCCs across the region. Each state in the Southeast has committed personnel to serve on Interim Steering Committees of each LCC in the Southeast; the Interim Steering Committees are providing oversight and guidance for future LCC functions. In the South Atlantic LCC (SALCC), the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission has contributed office space for at least two LCC staff at its building on the North Carolina State University Campus. The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources also committed staff to serve as the SALCC's interim coordinator for several months earlier this year.

The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency has committed office space, funding and partnership staffing for the Gulf Coastal Plains and Ozarks LCC (GCPOLCC) coordinator position

and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission is providing partial funding to hire the Peninsular Florida LCC (PFLCC) coordinator. Across the Southeast, resources have been leveraged to support science projects in which several states have strong commitments. For example, several states are vested partners in the Southeastern Aquatic Resources Partnership's (SARP) in-stream flow network as well as flyway-wide integrated monitoring of shorebird and water bird populations, which LCCs are supporting.

FWS Science

Dr. Bill Uihlein was recently named Assistant Regional Director (ARD) for Science Applications in the Southeast Region. In this role, he will play an even broader role helping the Service expand its work with partners to advance shared conservation goals through the growth and development of LCCs.

Steering Committees and governance

For the SALCC, an Interim Steering Committee is in place, partners are working on a governance document. In collaboration with individuals representing 22 private, state, and federal organizations, the Lower Mississippi Valley Joint Venture management board has accepted the responsibility to serve as an interim Steering Committee for the GCPOLCC and is working with other agencies and organizations interested in serving on that committee. The PFLCC has an Interim Steering Committee in place, which is comprised of partner organizations and agencies.

The Service is excited about the level of leadership and collaboration with its state partners in the development of LCCs across the Southeast. LCC Steering Committees will be comprised of Executive/Senior level leadership positions within state, federal and private organizations. The Service is committed to LCCs and its Southeast Regional Directorate members will serve as board representatives to each of the LCCs.

Partnership overview meetings

Partnership meetings have been conducted in the SALCC, GCPOLCC, PFLCC, Appalachian LCC, and the Gulf Coastal Prairies LCC. Planning for a meeting in the Caribbean LCC is underway.

Status of Available Funding, Staffing & Science Projects

The Service's Southeast Region has made more than \$3.6 million available so far for projects and staff to launch LCCs across the region and inform the development of conservation adaptation strategies. The primary focus was in the SALCC, where \$929,000 in FWS funding was spent for new and ongoing projects. An additional \$250,000 is available to support development of a southeastern Conservation Atlas, which will assist regional wildlife adaptation planning for natural resource government agencies and non-profit conservation organizations. Remaining Service funds were used to support LCC coordinators and science staff salaries as well as equipment needs. In addition, the Service's NWRS is using \$1.1 million to hire six new biologists to support inventory and monitoring needs and support some project funding as well. Science projects supported by the Service also were supported by approximately \$550,000 in state funding, and \$300,000 from other sources such as The Nature Conservancy.

The USGS is supporting many of these projects through the Southeast Regional Assessment Project (SERAP), as well as the emerging Regional Climate Science Center (CSC) for the Southeast. This CSC is one of the first established across the nation and will be located at North Carolina State University in Raleigh, North Carolina. Since 2009, USGS has invested \$2.3 million into the SERAP and the Service has invested nearly \$500,000.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

A sampling of projects and staffing actions includes:

SALCC – \$3.6 million (FWS)

- 1) Managing in-stream flows of the SALCC
- 2) Enhancing the Utility of International Shorebird Survey Data Management
- 3) Developing hierarchical landscape models for endemic unionid mussels
- 4) Designing Sustainable Landscapes (SERAP)
- 5) Downscaling climate change models (SERAP)
- 6) Building an SHC implementation template to meet waterbird management needs
- 7) Hiring six new biologists to support inventory and monitoring

SALCC - \$450,000 (USGS, NPS)

- 1) Improving Sea level rise predictions
- 2) Developing a water availability assessment
- 3) Downscaling climate change models
- 4) Providing staff to support inventory, monitoring, adaptation, and science support

GCPOLCC - \$700,000 (FWS, USGS)

- 1) Assessing sea level rise along Florida's panhandle
- 2) Downscaling modeling to the western portion of the LCC
- 3) Developing a common Land Use Land Cover dataset
- 4) Developing a reforestation decision support model for the MAV
- 5) Hiring an LCC coordinator and a science coordinator
- 6) Providing science support staff

PFLCC – \$385,000 (FWS)

- 1) Developing climate envelope modeling for T&E terrestrial species

Caribbean LCC - \$350,000 (USGS, USFS, FWS, PRDNR)

- 1) Downscaling climate models to the Caribbean Basin
- 2) Establishing vegetation dynamics under climate scenarios in Puerto Rico
- 3) Developing water quality and quantity predictions under climate scenarios
- 4) Developing fish and wildlife response and adaptation planning tools

LCC Coordinators and Science Coordinators

The Service, state fish and wildlife agencies, and the conservation community are working towards complete coverage of first phase staffing needs for LCCs in the Southeast. In the SALCC, Ken McDermond has been in place and based in Raleigh since July and is making tremendous strides advancing the collaborative interests and actions of the partnership. Dr. Rua Mordecai is the new science coordinator for the SALCC.

In the GCPOLCC, Greg Wathen will start as the GCPOLCC coordinator later this fall. John Tirpak, currently with the LMV JV, is the new science coordinator for the GCPOLCC, and will start this fall. Additionally, Mississippi State University has offered five offices, five cubicles, access to a super computer, administrative support, and the expertise of its scientists to the GCPOLCC.

In the PFLCC, a partnership effort between the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the Service will result in a coordinator being hired later this year.

In the Appalachian LCC, where the Service's Northeast Region has the lead with the Southeast Region supporting, Jean Brennan has been selected as the LCC coordinator.

The Gulf Coastal Prairies LCC, which is administered the Service's Southwest Regional Office, has an interim LCC coordinator (Barry Wilson, coordinator of the Gulf Coast Joint Venture) and hopes to hire a full-time coordinator within the next couple months.

A grassroots effort is developing for the Caribbean LCC with hopes of funding a coordinator within the next two years.

Additional information can be obtained by contacting:

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